

## DECEITFUL SPEECHES IN XENOPHON'S ANABASIS

In the *Anabasis*, Xenophon's narrator condemns the deception of friends (2.6.22-29), yet he also presents the three most important leaders in the work as carrying out such deceit in certain speeches, without it automatically making them villains. To investigate this apparent contradiction, I shall examine the intended effects and functions of the deceitful speeches directed at friends (or those on one's own side) which are given by these characters. Constraints of space allow me to discuss only one deceitful speech, or linked group of speeches, per character in depth.

I define deceptive speeches as occasions on which a speaker intentionally uses words to make his audience believe something that is untrue. It is important to recognise that it is not the author or narrator of the *Anabasis* who is being unreliable, but rather certain characters. Chatman (1990: 149-53) coined the term "fallible filtration" to describe inconsistencies between a character's thoughts or speech and the narrative. In some cases, according to Chatman, the narrator draws attention to the 'fallibility' on the part of the character. In other cases, the reader understands a thought or speech to be fallible without explicit guidance by the narrator.

### Cyrus

Cyrus gives three short, indirect deceitful speeches when trying to recruit Greek mercenaries for his army. Before these speeches, the narrator provides two pieces of information which allow the reader to recognise that what Cyrus subsequently says is deceptive. Firstly, we are told that Cyrus wants to replace his brother as King (1.1.4). Secondly, at 1.1.6, the narrator reveals that collecting a Greek army is part of Cyrus' plan for achieving this. However, in the same passage, Cyrus tells the commanders

of the garrisons to gather men because *Tissaphernes* has designs upon their cities. At 1.1.11, Cyrus tells Proxenus that he wants men to campaign against the *Pisidians*, while he also tells Sophaenetus and Socrates that he wants to make war on *Tissaphernes*. Once on the march, Cyrus continues to deceive by telling the men that they are to go against Abrocomas (1.3.20). These may be short-term plans or even lies (the term προφάσεις is neutral in tone). In any case, Cyrus has deliberately deceived the Greek army by omitting to tell them the actual aim of the mission.<sup>1</sup>

In terms of effects on the reader, Cyrus' deceit creates dramatic tension and irony. Until the armies of Cyrus and his brother meet, there are several interruptions to the progress of the journey as the men become suspicious of Cyrus' aims and refuse to go on. There is tension in finding out how they will be persuaded to continue and whether Cyrus will suffer for his deception. There is also a constant irony that if the soldiers had known the truth, they may never have agreed to join Cyrus in the first place. Despite this, when the men discover that Cyrus has been deceiving them, they do not condemn him, creating further irony.

### **Clearchus**

Clearchus gives several deceitful speeches, but I shall discuss his first one (1.3.2-6).<sup>2</sup> Clearchus is attempting to persuade the Greek mercenaries to go on, after they have refused to proceed. Information given before the speech hints at Clearchus' deception, and information after the speech confirms it. Before the speech, the narrator states that when Clearchus realised that he could not succeed in getting the army to continue with Cyrus by using force, he called a meeting (1.3.1). This suggests that his aims have not changed and that he is just trying a new tactic.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. 1.1.8 for a further deception by Cyrus.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. also 1.3.9-13, 1.3.15-16, 1.8.13-14 and 2.1.16-18.

He uncharacteristically weeps before he speaks, which raises questions about his sincerity for the reader.

Given these suspicions, the reader may doubt the way Clearchus presents his character and motives in the subsequent speech. He represents himself as not wanting to be proved deceitful to Cyrus or to desert the Greeks. He explicitly says that no one will ever say that, after betraying the Greeks, he chose the friendship of the barbarians. He also relinquishes his leadership powers to the men, saying that he chooses them and will follow them where they decide to go.

After the speech, the narrator describes Clearchus sending a message to Cyrus without the knowledge of the soldiers (1.3.8). He reassures an anxious Cyrus that he has the situation under control and orders him to keep requesting his presence, even though he will refuse to go to him. This is in preparation for his next deceitful speech where he lies to the men by saying that he does not go to Cyrus when he is called because he is ashamed and scared (1.3.10). Because the reader hears about this message, Clearchus' speech is undermined. He is *not* torn between the Greeks and Cyrus but *has* chosen the friendship of the barbarians over that of the Greeks. The narrator and reader share this ironic knowledge above the heads of the internal audience. Clearchus is also not relinquishing his lead to the men, but stage-managing the situation and their responses.

The presentation of this speech also creates dramatic tension. The narrator states beforehand that Clearchus' men nearly kill him when he tries to force them to go on (1.3.1). This adds an element of risk to Clearchus' attempt to get the men to proceed by deceiving them.

## **Xenophon**

The narrator is not always so helpful when revealing deceitful speeches. Concerning the deceptive speeches given by Xenophon, the narrator provides so little guidance that it is not entirely clear if the reader is meant to consider them deceitful. Xenophon tells the men that the enemy cavalry should not be feared (3.2.18-20) and on two other occasions tells the men that, after they have won certain battles, there will be no one else to fight (3.4.46 and 4.8.14). All three statements prove to be incorrect. Given that Xenophon was an experienced cavalryman, it is unlikely that he would misjudge the enemy cavalry so badly. Similarly, he seems to have no basis on which to declare that they will meet no further enemies. In this respect, all three assurances seem to be deliberate deceptions.

The narrator reveals these statements to be inaccurate simply by proceeding to tell the story. Here, then, the narrator allows the reader to be taken in along with the internal audience. Nevertheless, it is likely that Xenophon's original readers knew the extent of the troubles that the Greeks faced on their journey and so may have been sceptical about the accuracy of these speeches. This suspicion is not denied or confirmed at the time by the narrator and the reader may be left feeling uncertain as to exactly what to think. The effect here is not dramatic tension or irony, or even to make the reader angry at having been deceived, but it may be intended to engage the reader. Purves (2010: 159-195) has demonstrated that in sections of the *Anabasis* the narrative reflects the themes of hopelessness, feeling lost, and having a lack of end-point. Xenophon's deceptions fall within the sections which Purves highlights, whereas Cyrus and Clearchus' do not. All of Xenophon's deceptive speeches (cf. also 6.1.25-29 and 7.1.21ff.) have an ambiguity about them and so the

uncertainty they evoke in the reader may be designed to reflect the confusion the men are feeling as they attempt to return home. In this respect, the deceptive speeches given by Xenophon perhaps allow the reader to engage with the characters and the situation more. Indeed, all the deceptive speeches encourage reader engagement to some extent, because the reader has to actively interpret the speeches and their relation to the surrounding narrative.

### **Characterisation**

I shall now investigate some of the functions of the deceitful speeches. The clearest role is as a device for characterising the speakers. As well as being characterised as people, their leadership style is also characterised and is shown to be closely linked to their deception. The author deliberately shows Cyrus deceiving others as part of his characterisation. There is little chance that Xenophon knew that Cyrus directly deceived his brother, yet he includes such a scene (1.1.8). Through his deceitful speeches, Cyrus is characterised as clever in his distribution of knowledge and as able to gain and maintain the friendship and loyalty of leaders and soldiers, despite deceiving them. Here, then, is where we can see Cyrus' deceit being tied-in to his wider leadership methods. The *Anabasis* shows Cyrus using promises of rewards, demonstrations of his virtuous and generous nature, kind treatment of others, and a concern to reciprocate good behaviour with further rewards to get people to work for him and stay working for him (see especially 6.4.8). This way, he builds a stock of friends to call on in the future and his reputation quickly spreads, recruiting more followers. Because he has demonstrated the desirability of working for him, he is able to deceive others. When his deceit is eventually revealed to the Greeks, they do not notice or choose not to notice it and continue on with him

(1.4.11-12). Higgins (1977: 84) also notes that the men have gone too far to turn back by themselves. In this respect, Cyrus' deceit is both stage and risk managed.

Despite convincing the men of the goodness of his character and seemingly being idolised by the narrator, Cyrus has selfish motivations for deceiving that render him an ambiguous and perhaps somewhat villainous character for the reader. Ultimately, he wants to replace his brother as King because he wants revenge. Cyrus' brother had previously attempted to have Cyrus killed because of his suspected involvement in a plot (1.1.3). Cyrus, then, does not deceive the men for their own good but because he knew that they were unlikely to follow him if they were aware of his real aim. Cyrus has many good qualities but he deceives for his own ends.

The deception used by Clearchus consists of intentionally presenting himself and others falsely, carefully choosing his words, and stage-managing situations. He is characterised as having great skill at anticipating reactions, persuading others by a variety of techniques and engineering situations beneficial to himself. Through deceit, he makes others do what he wants, keeps others reliant on him and reinforces his position as a leader. Again, deceit is a deliberate part of Clearchus' presentation because we read certain information relating to his deceit which Xenophon could not have known about (1.3.8 and 1.3.13).

It is possible that Xenophon is appealing to the fifth and fourth century Athenian stereotype of Spartans who think one thing and say another (cf. Millender 2012: 388). Therefore, the deceit which Clearchus practices may be fictionalised or exaggerated to some degree. Hypothetically, Clearchus could even have avoided deceiving the men. In a deceitful speech at 1.3.9-13, Clearchus persuades the men to go on by falsely telling them that Cyrus is a terrifying enemy who would punish them. Given that the men are later persuaded to go on by money (1.3.21 and 1.4.12-13) and

Cyrus' good character (1.4.7ff.), Clearchus could have appealed to these elements. Instead, Clearchus uses concepts that the *Anabasis* presents as integral to his own leadership: fear, punishment, and control of others (cf. 2.6.9-10). As with Cyrus, then, we have seen that Clearchus' type of deceit fits in with his style of leadership more generally.

Clearchus' motives for deceiving remain unclear. On only one occasion is a motivation provided. We are told that he tries to deceive another character because he wanted to make the Greek mercenaries more hopeful (2.1.18). Nevertheless, by means of this deceit, Clearchus is trying to encourage the men to do something which accords with his own aims. The reader has to guess at Clearchus' motives elsewhere, and the final impression one gets is that he has a love of being in control and a desire to lead others and make others rely on him, rather than deceiving for the good of anybody else. The narrator does present Clearchus as having good elements too (2.2.5, 2.2.19-21, 2.3.10-13 and 2.6.1-15), so he is not entirely a villain. His self-interest and reliance on deception (among other things) means that he is not quite a hero either, though.

From his deceitful speeches, we see that Xenophon has forethought, cares about the morale of the men, and is astute. Obviously, as Xenophon is both author and character, he did not have to describe any deceit practiced by himself. Each of his character's deceptions is justified though, because he is shown to have the best interests of his men at heart. When Xenophon speaks about not fearing the enemy cavalry and the men having no further enemies to face, he makes the men believe that their journey home will be easier than it actually is. His motivation is to encourage the men to be brave and have hope so that they will fight better and save themselves. Because he has the best interests of the men at heart throughout the

*Anabasis* (for example, 4.5.7-8), again we can see that his deceit reflects his wider leadership style. Xenophon is consistently a 'hero'.

### **Adapted Realities and Moralities**

Another function for the deceitful speeches is an examination of how different realities and moralities exist during a time of warfare. The speeches show that deceiving friends, although usually bad, is simply unavoidable during war. As we have touched on above, it should be done for the right reasons and also be balanced with a reputation for trustworthiness.

It is a reality of warfare that the need for secrecy is often a justifiable reason for deceiving one's friends. A commander cannot risk one man giving away vital secrets to the enemy. Cyrus keeps the aim of the mission a secret from his men but this is less justifiable because it is in his own self-interest rather than for their benefit.

In the obituary Xenophon writes for Cyrus, we learn that Cyrus believed that he should be trustworthy when making agreements, that others thought he was trustworthy and that he demonstrated this trustworthiness (1.9.7-10). This reputation ensures the friendship and loyalty of others and allows him to deceive them. It is a reality of warfare that leaders need to appear honest so that people will trust them, work for them and make agreements with them.

By contrast, Clearchus' deception illustrates the perils of not appearing trustworthy. Clearchus is accused by the Persians of perjuring himself and breaking his oath of friendship with them (2.5.38-9). Given that he repeatedly carries out self-interested, deliberate and pre-planned deceit, the reader cannot be entirely sure that this accusation is untrue. Indeed, Xenophon the character says he is unsure whether Clearchus is guilty or innocent (2.5.38-41). This doubt arises because the narrator



does not present Clearchus as having a reputation for trustworthiness and by showing us his repeated use of deception. Without this reputation, others are able to slur his character.

A similar theme is played-out through Xenophon's deceit. Three times the men accuse Xenophon of deceiving them when he is not (5.6.27, 5.7.1-2 and 7.6.9-10). Although Xenophon is able to defend himself, if they thought he was trustworthy, he would not have had to face these situations in the first place. Xenophon appears to learn this lesson and he passes it on to the Thracian leader Seuthes (7.7.20ff.), as Hirsch (1985: 36) highlights. This perhaps mirrors how the *Anabasis* passes the message about trustworthiness on to the reader. As we have seen, Xenophon's deceitful speeches also show the reality that even 'heroes' have to resort to deceiving friends in warfare. Although Xenophon deceives the men with ease, he deceives for the right reasons in all situations.

A brief look at what Xenophon writes about the deceit of friends in some of his other works confirms the overriding reality which governs the deceit of friends in the *Anabasis*. In the *Cyropaedia*, Cyrus the Great's father gives a speech to Cyrus, saying that the current Persian education system is arranged so that boys do not learn to deceive friends, only enemies. Yet he also gives Cyrus the advice that the teacher of a previous generation taught that one could distinguish times when it was right to deceive friends as long as it was for good ends (1.6.27-34). Neither the *Cyropaedia* nor the *Hipparchicus*, a handbook for the ideal cavalry commander, explicitly advocate the use of deceit against friends. While ideally one would not practice deceit on one's friends, in reality it is an unavoidable part of being a leader in war, acceptable as long as it is for the good of others. Again, in the *Memorabilia*, Xenophon represents Socrates as saying that deceit can justifiably be used for the

good of someone else, including when a general checks discouragement amongst his men (4.2.14-17).

### **Assigning Responsibility and Justifying Actions**

A further function for the deceitful speeches given by Cyrus and Clearchus, along with certain narratorial comments relating to this deceit, is to assign responsibility for particular events specifically to them, while justifying others' role in these episodes. In contrast, Xenophon's deceitful speeches simply justify his actions and decisions.

The narrator specifically states that Xenophon was deceived by Cyrus as to the aim of the mission (3.1.9-10). This assigns blame to Cyrus for his deception and may reflect an authorial wish to clear Xenophon from some censure regarding his part in the mission. Hirsch (1985: 24, n. 40) argues that the focus on Cyrus' trustworthiness may also somewhat excuse Xenophon and the Greeks from joining his army.

Xenophon may also be using the presentation of Clearchus' deceit to assign blame to Clearchus and to justify his and the Greek army's role in events. Clearchus is tricked by one of the Persians into leading a number of generals and captains into a trap where they are all killed (2.5.27ff.). The narrator states that his reason for doing this is because he thought that a rival Greek leader would be removed as a result (2.5.28-29). The trap is justified by the Persians because of Clearchus' supposed betrayal of his oath with them (2.5.38). Whether self-interest clouded his judgement or whether he broke his oath, he is still to blame. As a result of the death of the generals and captains, the Greek army is thrown into turmoil. There are other incidents connected to Clearchus' deceit that he must take some responsibility for. He was the only general who knew Cyrus' true aim and so he brought the men on the mission under false pretences (3.1.10). As we saw, he persuaded the men to

continue the campaign when they did not want to (1.3.1ff.). He also pretended that he would follow Cyrus' battle orders at Cunaxa when he had no intention of doing so (1.8.13-14). As a result of the Greeks not following these instructions in the battle, Cyrus charged at his brother and was killed, again throwing the Greeks into turmoil. This removes any blame from Clearchus' fellow leaders, the mercenaries, and Xenophon, as they were not personally responsible for these events turning out the way they did.

Regarding Xenophon, we have seen that his use of deceit is always justified. Also, the author seems to be consciously trying to correct a conception of Xenophon as a deceiver, particularly by having him give three lengthy and successful speeches justifying himself against accusations of deceit (5.6.27-34, 5.7.4-13 and 7.6.10-38). Xenophon the author seems concerned to absolve Xenophon the character of blame not just in his presentation of Xenophon's own deceit but also in that used by Cyrus and Clearchus. This suggests that Xenophon's presentation of himself was a foremost concern during his presentation of the actions and speeches of others and even the events themselves.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, we have seen that creating dramatic tension, irony and engaging the reader in the story are effects of the deceitful speeches. They also serve the functions of characterising both the person and their leadership, investigating the realities and adaptations of moral codes in warfare, and assigning responsibility to certain characters while justifying others. It appears that Xenophon believed that deception formed a necessary part of leading others in wartime, but that it is vital that

a leader is justified in doing it. Overall, the deceitful speeches form examples of the right and wrong way for leaders to deceive. In this respect, Xenophon's aim appears to be didactic. The speeches by the different characters portray Xenophon's message more vividly than simple instructions would have, especially as the deceit of friends is not clear-cut. The effects of the speeches engage the reader in analysing the deceit, and the functions make his advice clear. Xenophon gives his readers the benefit of his experience and sets his own character up as the one that should be emulated. Xenophon the character is not completely perfect, however, but in some respects learns Xenophon the author's message along with the reader. From this analysis, it seems highly likely that the didactic aim of the deceitful speeches extends to other speeches in the work and indeed to the work as a whole.

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